

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 272 810

CG 019 293

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TITLE Comparison of the Self-Concept and Self-Esteem among Pregnant Adolescent Girls and Their Nullipara Peers.
PUB DATE [84]
NOTE 22p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adolescents; *Early Parenthood; Females; High Schools; High School Students; *Mothers; *Pregnancy; Racial Differences; *Self Concept; *Self Esteem

ABSTRACT

The problem of pregnancy among adolescent girls concerns every school system and community in the country. To determine the importance of pregnant adolescents' perceptions of themselves (self-concept) and their perceptions of how they are viewed by others (self-esteem), comparisons were made between their self-concept and the self-concept of their nullipara (never pregnant) peers. Subjects included 50 pregnant adolescents and 50 nullipara adolescent girls. The data gathering instruments consisted of the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale, Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale, and the California Achievement Test. The results indicated that self-concept and self-esteem might be important factors in black high school student pregnancies. The pregnant adolescents did not feel that out-of-wedlock pregnancy had the degree of stigma attached to it that one might suppose. Greater father absence, more school absenteeism, lower socioeconomic status, lower scholastic achievement, and a large percentage of blacks occurred in the pregnant group than in the nullipara group. Adolescent mothers face a bleak future. The problems created by teenage pregnancy must be faced by all and resources must be used with care. (Author/ABL)

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ED272810

COMPARISON OF THE SELF-CONCEPT
AND SELF-ESTEEM AMONG PREGNANT
ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND THEIR NULLIPARA
PEERS

Burnis Hall and Sue Taylor

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ABSTRACT

To determine the importance of pregnant adolescents' perceptions of themselves (self-concept) and their perceptions of how they are viewed by others (self-esteem), comparisons were made between their self-concept and the self-concept of their nullipara (never pregnant) peers. The data gathering instruments consisted of the Tennessee Self Concept Scale, Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale, and the California Achievement Test. Results indicate that self concept and self esteem might be important factors in black high school student pregnancies. The pregnant adolescents did not feel that out-of-wedlock pregnancy had the degree of stigma attached to it that one might suppose. Demographic variables with the greatest significance were ethnicity, father absence, family socioeconomic status, scholastic achievement and school attendance.

COMPARISON OF THE SELF-CONCEPT AND SELF-ESTEEM
AMONG PREGNANT ADOLESCENT GIRLS
AND THEIR NULLIPARA PEERS

Burnis Hall and Sue Taylor

The problem of pregnancy among school-age girls concerns every school system and every community in the country. More than one million teenagers (15-19 years old) become pregnant annually. Another 30,000 are less than 15 years of age. The frequency of pregnancy among this latter group is increasing (Michigan Department of Public Health, 1982).

The ideal of American equalitarianism is devoted to equal educational opportunity for person to grow, regardless of handicaps or limitations, to their fullest potential. The education of pregnant school-age girls is therefore, a natural and reasonable extension of the public school's responsibility. Although services normally are provided to the pregnant girl by social agencies, they do not make provisions for a coordinated effort and personal interest in the girl during a time of crisis in her life and in the critical periods following. Thus, pregnancy becomes a reason for the temporary or permanent dropout of school-age girls. Many of these girls, then, become statistics on police or welfare records, instead of realizing their potential as contributing members of society.

During the late 1960's and early 70's in-school alternative programs were developed specifically to meet the needs of pregnant school-age girls. Such a program was started at Benton Harbor High School in

January 1973 (DeHorn, 1973). The intent of the program was to encourage the pregnant girl to continue her education during and following pregnancy. The curriculum included experiences in child care, health nutrition, parenting, and courses leading toward graduation with marketable skills, along with the provision of counseling and social services. Girls admitted to the program agreed to attend individual and group counseling sessions.

The program at Benton Harbor High School^{*} and others nationally, have accrued information on the social and emotional problems experienced by pregnant adolescents. The data from these programs make it increasingly obvious to social workers, educators and the general public that teenage parents are ill-prepared for parenting. Important questions arise concerning this population. How do pregnant students think and feel about themselves? How do they feel that they are perceived by others? How do pregnant girls self-concept differ from their nullipara (never pregnant) peers? In what ways do the two groups differ demographically (i.e., scholastically, school attendance, socio-economic status, race, father absence)?

In an effort to answer the preceding questions, we conducted a study of black teenage parents with nullipara teenagers. The teenage parents were enrolled in a special school program (i.e., Scholastic Achievement Motivation Program or SAM) for pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers. The nullipara teenagers were randomly selected from the 1200 girls enrolled in Benton Harbor High School. This paper compares the self-concept and self-esteem of girls in the special school program (SAM) with the girls who were not in the special school program.

*Racial composition at Benton Harbor High School is 81% black.

Previous Studies

Only a small number of studies have examined the self-concept and self-esteem of pregnant adolescents. Lindeman (1974) found that a failure to redefine one's self-concept is an instrumental factor in unwanted pregnancies among teenage girls. By refusing to admit that they had developed into sexually active persons, many girls avoided the use of birth control measures with the subsequent consequence of pregnancy. Their self-concept allowed a spontaneous sexual "excursion." Preplanned coitus was in cognitive dissonance with their self-perception for realistic appraisal of the consequences.

Abernathy, Robbins, Abernathy, Grechbaum and Weiss (1975) found that family experiences in adolescence appeared to be critical in the development of attitudes and personality traits. Self-devaluation abetted conditions which invited greater sexual activity and the risk of unwanted pregnancy. A need for approval motivated the self-devaluated girls to gain male attention through sexual intercourse.

In evaluating a group counseling program with school-age pregnant girls, Shiller (1974) reported poor self image and inadequate ego strength. As a result of group counseling, the girls, became better informed about themselves and also showed an increase in self-esteem.

Studying changes in the self-concept of unmarried mothers in a Florence Crittenton Home, Kogen, Boe and Valentine (1965) concluded that pregnant adolescents had diminished self-concepts and self-esteem. Similarly, Zongker (1977) in comparing the self-concept of pregnant adolescent girls with a control group and published norms of the Tennessee Self-Concept

Scale found that school-age mothers exhibited poor self-esteem, feelings of inadequacy, unworthiness, and were dissatisfied with their family relationships and physical bodies.

Previous studies reveal low self-concept and self-esteem of pregnant adolescent girls. Wylie (1961) concluded that knowledge of self and knowledge of a person's environment provides a means of understanding and predicting behavior. Knowledge of a person's self-concept is also useful in attempting to help the pregnant adolescent in the provision of services, and in determining future aspirations.

Definitions

Wylie (1961) points out that the terms self-concept and self-esteem are not synonymous, even in the literary sense, however, they are intertwined and overlapping in the literature. For the purposes of this paper, the definitions offered by Fitts and Rosenberg will be used to differentiate between the terms:

Fitts (1965) defines self-concept as the phenomenological configuration of self reflective, affective, cognitive structures (i.e., the individual's perception of herself).

Rosenberg (1965) describes self-esteem as a socially derived evaluation of the self (i.e., how others perceive you).

Method

Subjects

The subjects in the treatment group consisted of fifty pregnant adolescents between the ages of fourteen and twenty. All were enrolled in an alternative program for pregnant girls. The control group of fifty nullipara (never pregnant) girls were randomly selected (using a table of

random numbers) and voluntarily consented to participate in the study. The control group was stratified by grade to coincide with the pregnant subjects (see Table I). A criteria for inclusion used with both groups was enrollment in Benton Harbor High School during the school years 1984-85 and 1985-86.

Instruments

The Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS hereafter) tests a subject's perception of herself (self-concept). The instrument is a self administered paper and pencil test consisting of 100 descriptive statements by which persons may portray themselves. Three subscales of the instrument were used, namely: family self, social self, and personal self.

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965) (RSES hereafter), seeks to determine how the individual girl perceives others to be valuing her worth (self-esteem). The scale consists of ten Likert-type items with one of four responses possible for each item. Items were registered on a six-point scale. Selber and Tippet (1965) found a test-retest correlation of .85.

Procedure

The two instruments were administered by the high school counselor to fifty pregnant subjects enrolled in the SAM program during March, 1986; the control group (nullipara) of fifty subjects in April, 1986. Approximate test time was 30 minutes.

Demographic data concerning what the participants felt were contributing factors of their pregnancies were also collected (i.e., race, living with whom, parental marital status, socio-economic status, father's

occupation and education, scholastic achievement and attendance).

Statistical Analysis

Analysis of several types were used to examine the data. T-tests measured differences in mean scores between the treatment and control group using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale. Chi-square and Kramer-Phi were used to test for significance among the demographic variables. The Pearson R and Point-Biserial Coefficient were used to determine the amount and significance of the relationship between the independent variable (i.e., pregnant and nullipara girls) and dependent variables (i.e., achievement, grade point average and attendance).

Results

Self-Concept and Self-Esteem

Two instruments were used to examine the data regarding self-concept and self-esteem, i.e., the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. The mean scores of pregnant and nullipara girls were compared to determine significant differences between the two groups.

The norms of the TSCS revealed a remarkable similarity tendency in self-concept between pregnant and nullipara adolescents on the three subscales--social self, family self, and personal self. In all cases, however, the self-concept of both groups was unquestionably low. The highest mean score registered by both groups was on a measure reflecting feelings of personal adequacy. On all three scales, the nullipara adolescents had higher self-concept scores than the pregnant group.

Self concept was portrayed by the mean scores of the pregnant adolescents on the three scales of the TSCS revealed that pregnant adolescents had pervasive feelings of being "bad," dissatisfied with their own behavior, doubts about their identity, and only minimal feelings of self worth. Surprisingly, the pregnant adolescents registered scores on the social self scale, indicating a strong "assumed similarity" tendency: pregnant adolescents assumed other girls to be like them or to have a self-concept similar to their own. The similarity between the groups was further evident when we compared their self-esteem as measured by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, which revealed no significant differences between the mean standard scores of the pregnant and nullipara adolescents.

Demographic Variables

Ethnicity was an important variable in comparing the two adolescent groups ($p=.001$). The sample of pregnant adolescents was predominately black (98%), whereas, the stratified random sample of nullipara girls conformed to the high school racial composition of 81% black enrollment. The presence of a large proportion of black pregnant girls is consistent with the history of the SAM program in Benton Harbor and with the findings of other studies. Black females are less inclined to have abortions than whites, and more prone to keep and rear their offsprings (Furstenburg, 1970; Gottschalk, 1964; Zongker, 1977). Fewer cultural sanctions against illegitimacy seem to exist within the black community and the adoption market for black children is smaller.

Father absence was another critical variable differentiating the two adolescent groups. The pregnant girls were significantly fatherless ($p=.001$), than were the nullipara girls. This finding is consistent with

those of Babikian and Goldman (1971), who theorized that most of the pregnant adolescents in their study had unresolved oedipal conflicts associated with the relationship to the father or his absence. A total of 79% of the pregnant adolescents were without fathers in their homes, as compared to 31% of the nullipara adolescents.

Socio-economic status also provided a significant demographic difference between the two groups ($p=.001$). More than 68% of the pregnant girls reported a family income of less than \$10,000 as compared to 24% of the nullipara girls. Hence, it appears that poverty was the lot of a significant proportion of the pregnant adolescents.

Finally, a significant difference in achievement and school attendance existed between the two groups ($p=.001$). Achievement was measured by using the California Achievement Test scores for each girl and grade point average for four major subjects (i.e., English, Mathematics, Science, Social Science). As a group, the pregnant adolescents had a lower mean CAT scores and lower grade point averages than the nullipara adolescents. While no inferences can be made concerning intelligence, emotional stress and other family problems, the difference does indicate that the pregnant adolescents had achieved less success in school than their nullipara peers. It also appears that the poor academic achievement among pregnant girls is related to their attendance records. As shown in Table II, the number of absences for the pregnant adolescents is more than twice that of the nullipara girls.

Discussion and Conclusions

Many differences arise in the comparison of the pregnant girls in

the Scholastic Achievement Motivation (SAM) program with the control group. There was little doubt that the pregnant adolescents exhibited a poor self-concept, feelings of inadequacy and unworthiness, and were decisively more dissatisfied with their family and social relationship. The possibility exists that some pregnant adolescents did not feel that out-of-wedlock pregnancy had the degree of stigma attached to it that one might suppose. Attitudes reportedly expressed by the subjects substantiate this conclusion (i.e., some girls showed a strong "assumed similarity" tendency). They felt relatively secure that no solutions exist for their problem. In addition, they were not chastized for their behavior or lack of commitment to the father of the child. However, another factor must be considered in understanding the pregnant girls self-concept scores. The subjects were in a milieu of acceptance in the school at the time the study took place. The fact that the school had a 81% black student enrollment may be an important determinant in the direction of racial differences in self-esteem.

Teenage pregnancy is represented in all populations (63% of the 200,000 women under age 18, who gave birth in 1979 were white), however, it affects disproportionately low-income black students (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1984). In this study, 98% of the pregnant subjects were black. Nationally, more than one in four black babies (compared with one in seven white babies) were born to adolescent mothers in 1979. One can only speculate that changing community mores and behaviors, increased numbers of single parent families and peer pressure for sexual relations, and the general vulnerability of adolescence are contributing factors in teenage pregnancy.

Failure to have a father in the home, was a notable difference between the two groups. The absence of a father greatly reduces the amount

of parental involvement. Single-parent families result in one less supervisory adult, but in addition, there is a high probability of a working mother to further reduce supervision. Both factors--absence of male authority figure and reduced parental control--could impact significantly on the development and behavior of adolescent girls.

High rates of adolescent pregnancy go hand-in-hand with low academic achievement, poor attendance patterns, low job and career expectations. Moreover, research by the Alan Guttmacher Institute and others show that the incidence of pregnancy goes up as the level of education falls, and goes down as educational levels and employment rates rise.

More than two-thirds of the adolescent mothers in this study were from families with incomes less than the established poverty level (i.e., \$10,000 for a family of four). According to the League of Women Voters (1984), adolescent pregnancy and parenting are important predictors of long-term poverty. Families headed by young mothers are seven times more likely to be poor than other families. Furthermore, the younger the mother the lower the expectation of an adequate annual income. All of these factors add up to a bleak and empty future for adolescent mothers.

Adolescent pregnancy and parenting are often viewed as a single issue. Adolescent parents, however, face unique problems, and teachers, school administrators and school board members are beginning to acknowledge that the most severe educational consequences for pregnant adolescents are those that develop with parenthood.

While programs for adolescent mothers, similar to SAM in Benton Harbor provide useful courses in family life, childcare, and child development, young parents are in most need of high quality academic courses and voca-

tional training in order to become independent, educated and productive adults. Pregnant and parenting students may have personal responsibilities different from those of other students, nevertheless, they have the same educational rights, but much greater educational needs, social support, cultural and psychological redirection. Finally, we had conjectured that there may be fewer sanctions regarding illegitimacy in the black, poverty-level community. Perhaps programs such as SAM should be tied in with community education. The tragic results of teenage pregnancy affect us all. Together we must face the complex of problems squarely and forthrightly. That there will be less support of government sponsored programs is obvious. Hence, we must use our ingenuity and resources with care.

TABLE I
DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLED POPULATION

Group	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	Total
Pregnant Girls	7 (14%)	14 (28%)	10 (20%)	19 (38%)	50 (100%)
Non-Pregnant Girls	6 (12%)	14 (28%)	12 (24%)	18 (36%)	50 (100%)
Total	13 (26%)	28 (56%)	22 (44%)	37 (74%)	100 (100%)

TABLE I
TOTAL ABSENCES BY GRADE LEVEL FOR PREGNANT
AND NON-PREGNANT RESPONDENTS

Group	Number of Girls	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	Total Absences
Pregnant Girls	50	311	655	335	689	1990
Non-Pregnant Girls	50	173	194	85	307	759
Total	100	484	849	420	996	2749

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RESUME

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EDUCATION

1972 Ed. D., University of Tennessee
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1968 M. Ed. Memphis State University
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1966 B. S. Memphis State University
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EMPLOYMENT

1984-present Associate Professor
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1980-1984 Associate Professor and Coordinator
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1975 Associate Professor
Wayne State University

1972 Assistant Professor
Wayne State University
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1970-1972 Instructor, (Completing Doctoral Studies
University of Tennessee
Knoxville, Tennessee

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EMPLOYMENT (Continued)

1968-1970	Principal and Assistant Principal Memphis City Schools Memphis, Tennessee
1966-1968	Elementary and Junior High School Teacher Memphis City Schools Memphis, Tennessee

PUBLICATIONS

Journals

- "Career Education: Models and Practice." Secondary Education Today: Journal of the Michigan Association of Second School Principals (December 1975).
- "Involving the Community in Mettrication." The American Metric Journal (May-June 1975).
- School Research Newsletter, College of Education, Wayne State University, Co-editor, 1975-1976.
- "Introducing Students in the Middle School to Mettrication." Michigan Elementary School Principal Journal (Winter 1976).
- "Community Involvement: An Essential Ingredient for Decentralization." Secondary Education Today: Journal of the Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals (1976).
- "Decentralization: The Model of Detroit." Trends in Education, London, England (September 1976).
- "Lay Advisory Council Attendance in a Decentralized School District." Secondary Education Today: Journal of the Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals (Summer 1977).
- "Here We Come, Ready or Not--Community Involvement in Teacher Collective Bargaining." Catalyst for Change (October 1978).
- "Detroit Community Councils Take on the Problem of Police Presence in the Schools." Community Education Journal (March 1979).
- "An Interview with Arthur Combs." Urban Educator, College of Education, Wayne State University (Spring 1981).
- "Working with Community Advisory Councils: Key to Success in Urban Schools." Phi Delta Kappan (March 1982).

Burnis Hall

SCHOLARLY AWARDS

- | | |
|----------|--|
| 1971 | National Defense Graduate Fellowship |
| 1973 | A Plaque "In Appreciation for Service," from the National Center for Community Education. |
| 1975 | Listed in <u>Who's Who Among Black Americans</u> , First Edition. |
| 1977-78 | National Academy for School Executives Scholarship Award. |
| 1979-80 | Listed in <u>Dictionary of International Biography</u> , 1979-80 Edition. |
| May 1977 | Award for Outstanding Service, Wayne County Intermediate School District, Project Glasser. |
| 1980 | Certificate of Appreciation from Region One, Board of Education, Detroit Public Schools, contributions to School-Community Council Convention. |
| 1981 | Certificate of Appreciation, from the Business Education Alliance, Detroit Chapter of Commerce, January, 1981. |
| 1982 | "Outstanding Career Educator Award," Michigan Association for Career Education, September, 1982. |
| | "Honored Citizen Award" from the Detroit Public Schools, November, 1982. |

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

- | | |
|-------|--|
| AASA | American Association of School Administrators |
| BEA | Black Educators Association, Inc. |
| MASA | Michigan Association of School Administrators |
| ASCD | Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development |
| NCSEA | National Community School Education Association |
| NASSP | National Association of SEcondary School Principals |
| AAUP | American Association of University Professors |

Burnis Hall

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS (Continued)

PDK	Phi Delta Kappa
NABSE	National Alliance of Black School Educators
MAPEA	Michigan Association of Professors of Educational Administration
MAPACE	Michigan Association of Public Adult and Community Education
MCSEA	Michigan Community School Education Association
MANWC	Michigan Association for Non-White Concerns
MDABSE	Metropolitan Detroit Alliance of Black School Educators
NABCE	National Alliance of Black Community Educators

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BIRTHPLACE: Princeton, West Virginia

EDUCATION

Ed.D. Wayne State University, 1984
Major: General Administration and Supervision

Ed.S. Wayne State University, 1980
Major: General Administration and Supervision

M.A. Western Michigan University, 1957
Major: Guidance and Counseling.

B.S. Bluefield State College, 1947
Major: Business Administration (Cum Laude)

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

1974-Present Coordinator of Alternative Programs for Pregnant Student, Benton Harbor Area Schools.

1964-1974 Guidance Counselor, Benton Harbor High School

1964-1967 Coordinator of Upward Bound Students from Benton Harbor High School for Western Michigan University.

1964 Summer Employment Counselor with Michigan Employment Security Commission.

1963-1964 Teacher, Benton Harbor High School, Business Education courses.

1960-1963 Teacher, Benton Harbor Junior High School, Mathematics

1959-1960 Teacher, Hull Elementary School

1954-1959 Principal-teacher, Stump Elementary School

1952-1954 Tenant Clerk, Benton Harbor Housing Commission

1949-1950 Teacher of Adult Education, Benton Harbor Area Schools

1946-1948 Assistant to Registrar, Bluefield State College

1942-1946 Stenographer, Statistical Clerk and Supervisor with Signal Corps of the War Department, Pentagon, D. C.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Past State President of Michigan Alliance for School Age Parents
Past President of Delta Kappa Gamma Society--Rho Chapter
Member of American Association of University Women
Member of Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
Member of Benton Harbor Public Library
Past Board Member of Planned Parenthood
Golden Life Member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority

HONORS/AWARDS

NDEA Mathematics Fellowship, Bowling Green State University

Honorary Admissions Counselor appointment to the United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland